**US Department of Education**
**2007 SBIR Fast-Track**
**Solicitation ED-07-R-0003**
**Amendment 1**

**1. Are projects relating to post-secondary education acceptable?**

Yes.

**2. When is the due date for proposals?**

10am EST on 1/8/2007. Please note that 10am is the time at which the proposal must be at the delivery place designated in the solicitation.

**3. How many applications were received for the last cycle?**

This is the first time that Education has exclusively solicited for fast-track proposals so no accurate data is available. However, approximately 120 offers were received for the last Phase I only contract competition for the Institute of Education Sciences.  Of those, approximately 38 received contract awards.

**4. What is the typical win rate for the SBIR program?**

This varies from year to year based on the number of offers received, the quality of the offers, and the amount of funding available.

**5. How many contract awards are typically given to firms that are neither women-owned nor Small and Disadvantaged Businesses?**

There are no preferences for sub-groups of small businesses for this program.  While offerors are asked to self-identify if they are any special category of small business, it has no impact on the award decision.

**6. The proposal announcement also states "the primary employment of the principal investigator must be with the small business firm at the time of award and during the conduct of the proposed research.... more than one-half of the principal investigator's working time..." Is it possible that the contract can "buy out" 50% of the PI time (within the stated limitations) or is this to mean that the contract can not be used to buy out the time from the University?**

During the period of performance, which begins on the date of award, the PI's must be primarily employed by the offeror.

**7. I am developing a product that is specifically geared toward education in one specific career field-is that acceptable?**

Yes.

**8. For the Yes/No questions in section "2. Project Narrative - Key Information", do we need to repeat the statement of the question, or is it sufficient to list answers in a format such as:**

**Small Business Certification: YES**
**Socially and Economically Disadvantaged SBC Certification: NO**
**Etc.**

The suggested format is acceptable.

**9. Can we omit the Legend for Proprietary Information section (2(e) in the RFP) if we have no confidential proprietary information, or should we make a statement to this effect?**

The absence of a legend is indicative of the absence of proprietary data.

**10. In section 2, there are two part (d)s. Should we combine them (they are both all yes/no questions) or should we relabel the second (d) as (e), and section 2(e) as 2(f)?**

It is most important that offerors clearly provide the information requested.

**11. Will offers to develop products for pre-school age children be considered?**

Yes.

**12. Are co-PI's allowed?**

Yes. There are no special restrictions on their time. The PI must still be principally employed by the offeror, however.

**13. Must I both submit Appendix E and register in ORCA and CCR?**

Yes.

**14. Does the US Department of Education expect offerors to use all 50 pages?**

The length of the proposal is a business decision to be made by each offeror. Offerors need to make sure that their proposals are thorough and contain all necessary information to make a decision.

**15. Must there be an accompanying certification for every proposed staff biography submitted?**

Yes. Biographies without the certification cannot be considered under any circumstances. The certification must be signed both by the subject individual and by someone authorized to bind the offeror. Any proposed consultant for subcontractor staff for which there is a submitted biography

must also submit the name.  The intention is to make sure that information submitted on proposed key staff is accurate.

**16. Is there a specified budget format?**

No.

**17. Is it necessary to partner with another business or institution to receive an award?**

No.


**18. Will you consider awarding in excess of $100,000 for Phase I or $750,000 for Phase II?**

No.

**19. By when must I be a for-profit corporation?**

At the time that you submit your offer.

**20.  On Section 2 (b), page 14, it states the following:**

**"Select the <u>one</u> priority area that is most appropriate for this project: (<u>Note</u>: See Section 8 for information on the Priority Areas.)**
>     i.   **Priority 1: Education technology products for students**
>     ii.  **Priority 2: Education technology products for teachers**
>     iii. **Priority 3: Education technology products for school or district administrators"**

**What if the proposed project provides features beneficial to more than one priority area? Should we select the area that it benefits the most or the top priority area that it benefits?**

The offeror determines which priority is most appropriate for his/her proposal.

**21. Can existing products/solutions that are not a cohesive solution be proposed to add major expansions, enhancements and integration to them -- by providing a consolidated product that unifies various pieces of the solution while adding significant amount of new and innovative features?**

The research and development of a product that *unifies existing pieces of a solution while adding significant amount of new an innovative features* would likely be appropriate for consideration, as the solicitation (p. 8) defines the term "Innovation" as: "Something new or improved, having marketable potential, including (1) development of new technologies, (2) refinement of existing technologies, or (3) development of new proposals for existing technologies."

**22. Is it a requirement that schools (or education delivery settings) that have agreed to participate in the Phase II research study be a public entity?  If we are providing services to a private not-for-profit school, can this be listed in Appendix A?**

The solicitation does not require the Phase II research to be performed in a public entity.

**23.  For the USDE (IES) SBIR program (Phase I and II), will you consider research on a product that could effectively deliver reading instruction outside of school, for example, in homes and after-school care settings?**

The solicitation does not require that the proposed product be used or delivered only in schools.

**24.  I understand that the product must prove to be effective at delivering learning in studies with a randomized design.  Most of the language talks about school or educational delivery settings as if the expectation is that they be formal settings.**

The solicitation does not require that the proposed research be conducted in a formal setting.

**25.  Does this solicitation support materials for use in informal learning environments?**

The solicitation does not limit the scope of proposed products to formal learning environments.

**26.  Does this solicitation support development of educationally powerful toys, games, and creativity products that may be used at home?**

The solicitation does not prohibit the development of *educationally powerfully toys, games, and creativity products*. The solicitation does not define the place where the product can be used.

**27.  Schools generally do not allow use of licensed characters from television program in instructional materials, such as Big Bird from Sesame Street, because these promote purchase of commercial products which many children can't afford and shouldn't be influenced to buy.   Would this funding also preclude use of licensed characters and popular stories from television in product development for reading?**

No such restrictions are indicated in the solicitation.

**28.  Are there any specific requirements regarding the format/form of the references used in the response to RFP Number: ED-07-R-0003? Should the references be at the end of the proposal? Should they be at the bottom of the page indicated as footnotes?**

The solicitation does not provide instructions on the use or placement of references.

**29.  In the list of educational content areas for student materials ("reading, writing, math, science, or pro-social development/ character development"), technological fluency is not mentioned. Is ED's intent to exclude technology skills and concepts (e.g. concepts of control structures, variables, data abstraction etc. in scripting / programming; skills and practices of engineering; for example as described in the NRC report "Being Fluent with Information Technology"), or are they considered part of math and science broadly construed? To be more specific: if a project develops _both_ math and technology skills, is**

**ED's interest only in the math outcomes, and technology outcomes do not count toward the project's value in the review process?**

As the question notes, the specified content areas for this solicitation include reading, writing, math, science, or pro-social development / character development. If an offeror seeks to address the topic of technological fluency, such a topic would need to be framed within one of the stated content areas noted above. If a proposal's content does not fall within one of the three priority areas or is outside of the content areas listed above (or does not meet the specifications as required in the proposal), the proposal will be identified in the pre-review screening and will be returned to the offeror without review or further consideration. If a proposal successfully proceeds through the pre-review screening process, reviewers will base their evaluations on the criteria listed in Section 5 of the proposal. In response to the question regarding whether *math outcomes and technology outcomes will count towards the project's value in the review process*, the entire proposal will be considered by reviewers.

**30. I am interested in submitting a proposal for the upcoming US DOE SBIR and want to inquire as to the definition of "pro-social development/character development" in the priority topics for educational technology for students and/or teachers. Is this description meant to be broadly applied? - will technology innovations that help moral development based on rationally applying moral principles be acceptable? Or is the description more narrowly defined, such that specifically you want only "pro-social development or character development" innovations (which are areas of research too). Our idea seems only valid if the broader definition is of interest (encompassing moral development and principles), but not so if the narrow, more-specific definition is what is wanted.**

The area of pro-social / character development is defined broadly to include aspects of education that serve to enhance student's overall social and emotional development. A project that focuses on moral principles would need to address one (or both) of these aspects of a student's development to be considered within the scope of the solicitation.

**31. I'm wondering whether technological products to facilitate study of a foreign language would fall into the 2007 content areas of "reading, writing, math, science, or pro-social development/character development."**

A project that enhances student's ability for foreign language would also have to address one (or more) of the content areas specified in Priority 1 or 2 of the solicitation.

**32. My company develops high-level simulation tools to support strategic planning for organizations. We have recently talked with some local school districts to check their level of interest in participating in the development of a strategic planning simulation tool for school districts (see attached PowerPoint presentation). Interest is extremely high and there appears to be a market for this type of tool. Nothing like this exists, according to the two superintendents that want to participate as pilots.**

**a) Would a strategic planning simulation tool like this be responsive to Priority 3 (Education Technology Products for School or District Administrators)? In other words,**

**would ED be interested in seeing something like this, or are they instead looking for more lower-level detailed admin tools like databases, accounting programs, etc.?**

The offeror must determine whether the project is appropriate for a particular priority based on the information provided in the solicitation.

**b) Second, my company has developed an agent-based supply chain simulation tool that simulates the activities of organizations in a supply chain. We have considered creating an ecosystem simulation tool based on this same approach in which the user creates an interconnected web of predators, prey, and food/water sources (see attached Word document). Such a tool would help teachers show students the impacts of various changes to ecosystems (e.g., population spikes, migration from one ecosystem to another ecosystem to find more food, etc.) to help them better understand ecosystem dynamics. I presented a simple "food chain" (cougar-deer-grass) version of this to several 5th grade students at our local school and they really enjoyed it and said it helped their level of understanding. The teachers agreed and said it was an invaluable teaching aid. Second question: Would an ecosystem simulation tool like this be responsive to Priority 2 (Education Technology Products for Teachers)? Or, is ED more interested in admin tools for teachers?**

The offeror must determine whether the project is appropriate for a particular priority based on the information provided in the solicitation.

**33. In the case of a software service that addresses priority 3 - "Education Technology Products for School or Districts", or "R/R&D of technical products used by administrators" - what standards for scientific and technical merit would be reasonable for Phase I and Phase II? Would having feedback from a small set of administrators (2-3) saying that they would see value in the proposed product suffice? Would a larger sample - say 20-30 - be required, and if so, is the idea to provide results of a "survey" that indicates that most members of this group would be interested in purchasing the proposed product? I guess my question is, at the end of the day, what is the standard of proving the merit of a proposed software product that targets administrators (does it require statistical or testing expertise? What is the "scientific" standard that needs to be met?)**

The offeror must determine what is appropriate for demonstrating the merit of the project during Phase I and II, and should indicate why the selected design is sufficient for demonstrating technical merit.

**34. For us to design some Phase II testing to evaluate the efficacy of our proposed computer-based instructional method, we need to do randomized testing of student users. Is this considered Human Subjects testing?**

The offeror should refer to Appendix D on Page 46 of the solicitation.

**35. Could you give examples where randomized testing was not needed to evaluate the efficacy of proposed computer-based instructional methods?**

As stated on page 19 the solicitation states: "*Only in circumstances in which a randomized trial is not feasible* should alternatives be employed." Thus, each offeror must determine if a randomized test is or is not feasible.


**36. Will there be another amendment to respond to further questions?**

The deadline for submitting questions, as stated in the solicitation, has already passed. The Government cannot guarantee that questions received at this point will receive a response. Please remember that all questions are to be submitted in writing.